漫画人

MANGAJIN

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POP CULTURE
& LANGUAGE
LEARNING
No. 48

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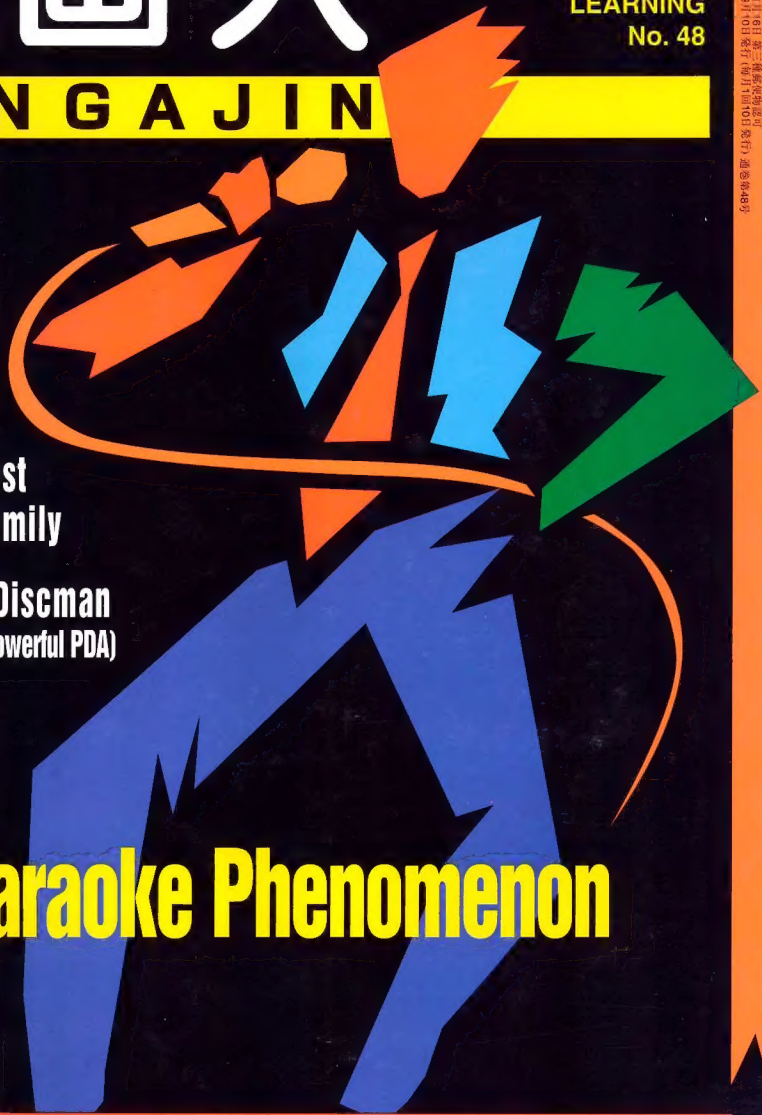

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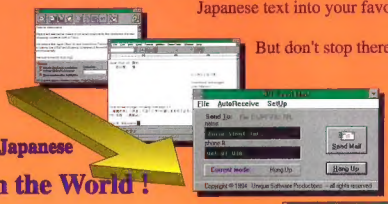

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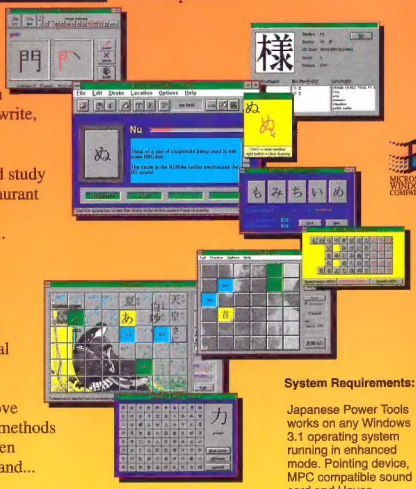

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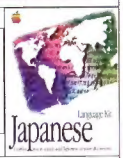

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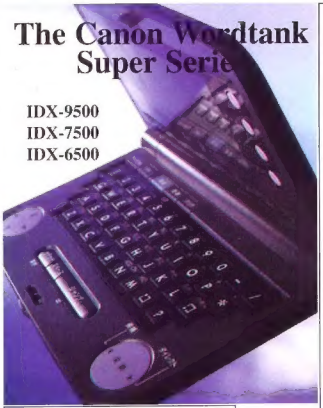

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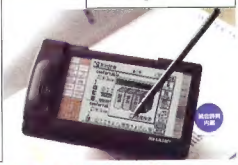

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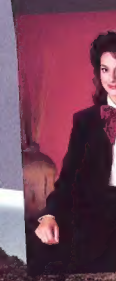

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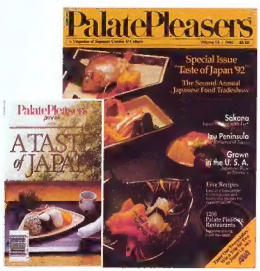

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Mangajin is a made-up word combining *manga* ("comics/cartoons") and *jin* ("person/people"). It sounds almost like the English word "magazine" as rendered in Japanese—*magajin.* All of the Japanese manga in *Mangajin* were created in Japan, by Japanese cartoonists, for Japanese readers.

publisher's note

Tapes are such an important part of language learning that I can't believe we have waited this long to come out with *Mangajin* tapes.

In keeping with our philosophy that language learning should be fun, we decided to go with dramatic enactments of the manga, rather than simply have an "announcer" read the lines for clarity. Used together with the magazine, the tapes will add a new dimension to the manga stories. They should also be just the thing for that long commute to work.

The Japanese language is especially rich in what are sometimes called "sound effect words" (*giseigo* and *gitaigo*), and that's probably one reason why sound effects, and other types of effects, are such an integral part of manga. Even though the effects are a relatively small part of the total linguistic mix, they provide a crucial "spice" that makes the medium come alive. On the tapes, we use dramatic readings of these effects rather than actual sound effects. For one thing, what would you use for effects like *shiin*, the effect of stillness or quietness, or *garān*, the effect of a room being empty?

When "sound effect words" are used in conversation—and they are used quite a bit—they usually get something of a dramatic delivery. On more than one occasion I have been surprised to hear an otherwise staid Japanese lady or gentleman momentarily turn into a manga character in relating how a door *slam*med shut, or how a train *rattle*d down the track. Throwing occasional sound effects into your conversation can liven things up considerably, and it's nice to be able to give them a little punch.

(See page 24 for more info on the *Mangajin* Tapes.)

The *Mangajin* CD-ROM brings together the sights and sounds of manga, and even the notes from *Mangajin*. Our first is a collection of material from the first 10 issues. (See page 58 for more info.) If demand dictates, there will be more.

Even before the recent increases in paper prices, the cost of setting up a printing press made it impossible to go back and reprint those early issues. But with electronic publishing, we can bring you those *Mangajin* classics in an enhanced format.

It's not all electronic! We can't neglect our new book, *Bringing Home the Sushi*, which provides a look at the human side of Japanese business. Much of the material is from past issues of *Mangajin*, but we have put English in the "balloons," and included introductory essays for each story from people like T.R. Reid, Glen Fukushima, Peter Duus, Herbert Glazer, and Mark Schilling. The original Japanese (with *furigana* readings) is shown at the bottom of the page, so the book can also be used for language learning, but our main goal is to bring the world of Japanese manga to an even wider readership.

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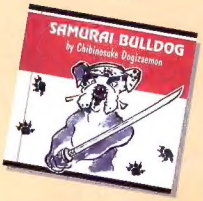

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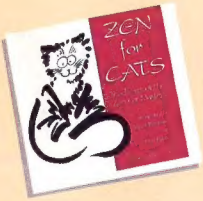

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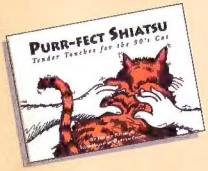

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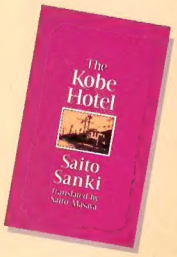

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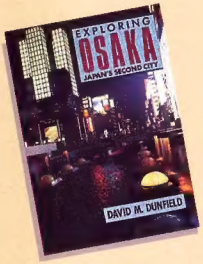

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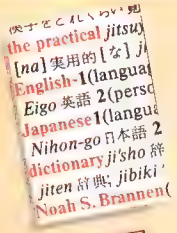

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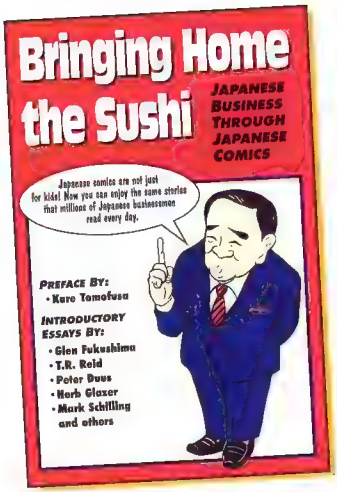
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Bringing Home The Sushi

Japanese Business through Japanese Comics

An inside look at the trials, tribulations and triumphs of Japan's salarymen (and women)

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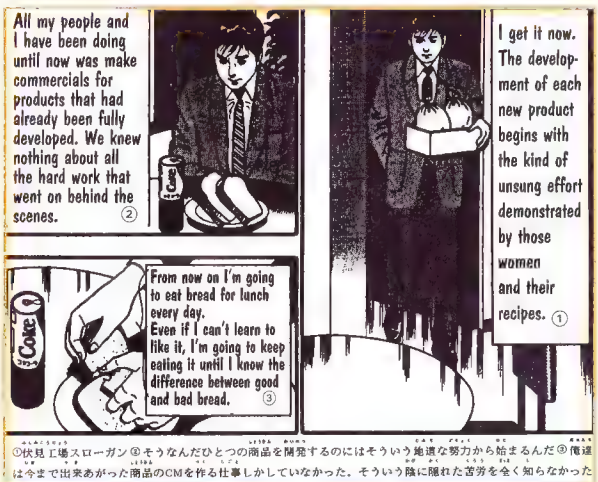
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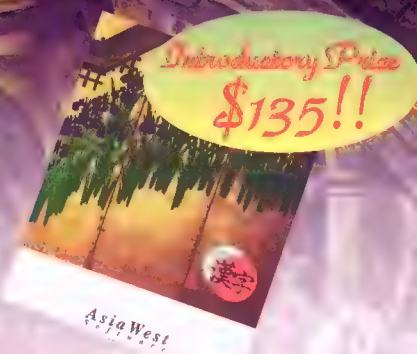

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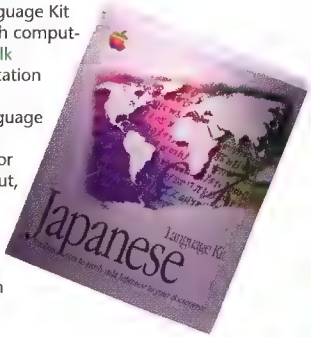

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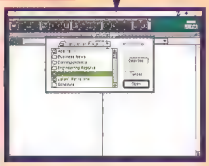

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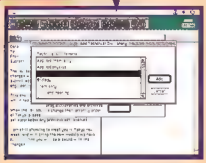

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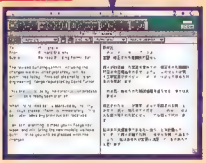

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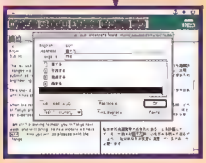

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They Call Him Baka Bill

I am an interpreter and tour coordinator for Japanese guests visiting the Orlando area. Quite often people come up to me who have either visited Japan or learned a few phrases and would like to show off what they know by saying something to me in Japanese.

One day I was at the airport meeting clients when an American man who had stepped off the plane from Japan approached me. He said, "*Baka wa Bill desu*" ("Bill is stupid"). What he meant to say was "*Boku wa Bill desu*" ("I am Bill"). When I told him what he had said, he turned bright red and said, "I give up!" I told him that it was a simple mistake and don't give up because Japanese is one of the most difficult languages to learn and is a valuable asset to anyone who can speak it.

YUKI GILLIS
Orlando, FL

Disaster Diplomacy

A frequent requirement of a diplomat's life in Japan is to give *aisatsu*, "welcoming remarks," at official events. My husband David, the US Consul-General for Osaka/Kobe, recently did so at a charity concert given by the Pittsburgh Symphony for victims of the Great Hanshin Earthquake.

In his remarks, he meant to say "I hope and pray for Kobe's reconstruction"—*Kōbe no go-fukkō ni inorimasu*. Instead, he inadvertently dropped a *k* and said "*fukō*," in effect saying that he prayed for Kobe's misfortune. Luckily the audience was forgiving, but he wondered why they were laughing at what he thought was a serious moment.

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ぱぴぷペロティ

Pa pi pu perotii

Pa pi pu perotii

Long-time *Mangajin* fans may recognize this type of word play from the Brand News column in issue No. 30, which featured a product called *sa shi su se soruto* ("sa shi su se salt"). *Sa shi su se so* and *pa pi pu pe po* are rows (the "s" row and the "p" row, respectively) of the Japanese syllabary. These sound rows trip off the Japanese tongue as naturally as the alphabet song flows from American mouths, making them ideal for ad copy.

Pa pi pu leads up to *pero*, an effect word used to describe the act of "gobbling up" (ぺろっと食べる, *perotto taberu*), or, as with these little candies, "licking up" (ぺろぺろ舐める, *pero pero nameru*). It is not totally clear what the *tii* stands for. It may be an echo of the French *petit*, or of the English word-ending *-ty*, meaning "having the quality of ~" (as in "salty" or "gritty"). If the latter, *perotii* could be translated as "having a lickable quality."

On the side of the package is an acrostic using *pa pi pu*. *Pa* stands for *pafu iri* (ぱふ入り, "marshmallow filling"); *pi* stands for *pishatto nonshugā* (ぴしゃっとノンシュガー, "strictly non-sugar"); and *pu* stands for *puchi saizu no perotii* (ぷちサイズのペロティ, "petits perotiis").

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Shinkansen is, of course, the name of the Japanese Bullet Train, the preeminent symbol of technological achievement. *Shinkansen*-the-train is written 新幹線, literally "new trunk line." *Shinkansen*-the-washer/dryer is written with the exceedingly appropriate kanji 新乾洗, which mean "new drying washing."

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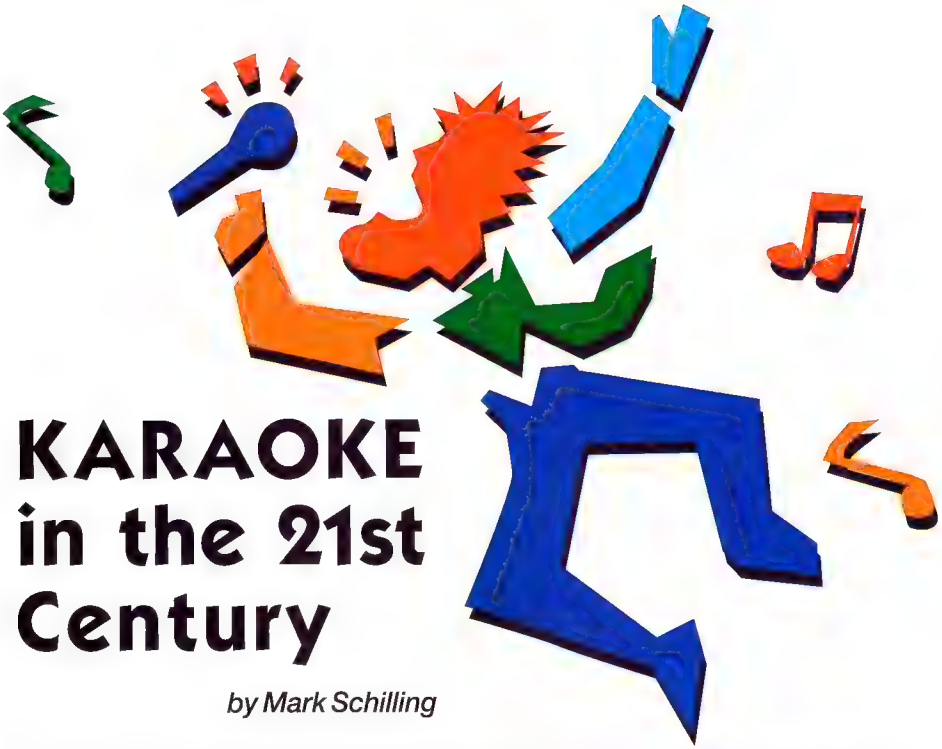

KARAOKE in the 21st Century

by Mark Schilling

PROPELLED BY THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION, KARAOKE OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS HAS MANAGED TO LOSE ITS SEAMY IMAGE AND BECOME COOL. MARK SCHILLING SHEDS LIGHT ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THIS FAVORITE JAPANESE ACTIVITY THAT IS POISED TO TAKE ON THE WORLD.

Karaoke, once an after-hours pastime for sodden salarymen, has in the past decade become a generation-spanning institution, an activity of choice for the masses that is holding its own with computer games and VCRs. In short, karaoke has moved out of the "water trade" ghetto of sleazy bars and clubs and into the mainstream of Japanese life. Grade-schoolers pick up the mike at McDonald's while their teenage brothers and sisters while away the hours at the karaoke *bokkusu* (ボックス, "boxes") that pepper nearly every urban neighborhood. Later in the evening, Dad croons with office colleagues at a bar (made much classier by its laser-disc karaoke system and Las Vegas–in–miniature stage), while Mom and Grandma sit in front of the television at home, singing along with their favorite *uta bangumi* (歌番組, "song shows") as they read the lyrics that appear across the bottom of the screen.

To those who know the country only from movie and media images of stoic samurai and nerdy salarymen, it may seem strange that the Japanese would have not only invented karaoke, but embraced it with such a passion. Isn't Japan supposed to be a "shame" culture, where standing out is the ultimate taboo? What could be more embarrassing than to make an idiot of yourself in front of a roomful of strangers? What could be more exhibitionistic than to actually enjoy the experience?

In fact, Japanese loved to sing long before karaoke, and have historically shown fewer inhibitions about strutting their stuff in public than most Westerners. Consider the enduring popularity of *"Nodo Jiman"* (のど自慢, "I'm Proud of My Voice"), a four-decade-old NHK amateur hour that gives folks from Hokkaido to Kyushu a chance to exercise their

• sodden – 酒浸りの *sakebitari no* • while away – 〜を〜過ごす *toki o sugosu* • pepper = 散在する *sanzai suru* • exhibitionistic = 露出趣味的 *roshutsu shumi-teki*

vocal chords with a live band before a big hometown crowd and a national television audience. Or the tour buses and boats whose female guides trill local *min'yō* (民謡, "folk songs") while the passengers clap and sing along. Or pre-karaoke *enkai* (宴会, "drinking parties"), which inevitably featured inebriated revelers wailing their favorite *natsumero* (なつメロ, "nostalgic melodies") at the top of their not-always melodic voices.

Why are the Japanese such unabashed vocalists? One reason may be that they tend to focus on the sincerity of a singer's attempt, and not to measure an amateur's rendition of "My Way" against the Frank Sinatra original. The Japanese are by and large willing to forgive even the *onchi* (音痴, "tone deaf") their acts of butchery, so long as they *isshōkenmei ni yaru*, or "give it a good try." A tendency to judge mediocre singing harshly renders most Americans self-conscious enough to confine their vocal outbursts to the shower, but in the uncritical atmosphere of Japan, amateur singing has long been a source of joy free of shame. In short, the seed of karaoke fell on fertile soil.

The Past

Karaoke's invention remains a matter of dispute, though all claimants are from the Kansai region. The basic idea is simple but brilliant: provide to amateur singers a machine that plays the kind of tapes professionals use to hone their acts, i.e., tapes which contain orchestral backing but no melody line (*kara* means "empty" and *oke*, "orchestra"). Handed a mike and a songbook, Mr. Anonymous could suddenly fancy himself Misora Hibari or Ishihara Yujiro—a heady feeling that, as it turned out, many were more than happy to pay for.

Kisaburō Takashiro is one of those who claims to have invented karaoke. He was managing a record store in Osaka in the early 1970s when he discovered that local snack bars were hiring organists to accompany crooning patrons at ¥500 to ¥1,000 a pop. Feeling that he could do the job better and cheaper with tape, he built a machine containing the tapes of 400 songs, installed it in a snack bar, and charged ¥100 a tune. The machine was so popular with patrons that he earned his money back in three months. The first karaoke boom was under way.

Early karaoke, however, left much to be desired. The machines were clunky, with bulky eight-track tapes and mikes heavy enough to stun hecklers with one blow. Moreover, they had all the subtlety of a high school P.A. system; the vocally challenged sounded truly awful, making a visit to a karaoke bar a test of endurance until you got your own turn at the mike (and a chance to inflict pain on your tormentors).

In addition, many of the early bars were poorly soundproofed. As the evening wore on, and inebriated Kitajima Saburō wannabes began bellowing ever more loudly, noise complaints from the neighbors would routinely begin to flood into the local police box.

Finally, the selection of tunes was narrow, usually ranging from World War II *gunka* (軍歌, "military songs") to slightly mildewed *enka* (演歌, sentimental Japanese ballads). This represented a hopelessly unhip line-up for younger Japanese and foreigners with a taste for contemporary rock and pop. For years, therefore, and not unjustifiably, karaoke was viewed as the after-hours recreation of middle-aged men with retro tastes and whiskey-deadened auditory nerves.

The second karaoke boom came in 1983 with the introduction of compact and laser discs. The new discs provided not only audio but also visual accompaniment that helped singers get into the mood. Subtitles on the screen were an additional benefit, allowing singers to belt away without referring to bulky lyrics books.

But what transformed karaoke into a truly national obsession, triggering the third karaoke boom, was the invention of a Nagoya entrepreneur that debuted in 1986: the karaoke *bokkusu*. Originally an abandoned railway car partitioned into booths and outfitted with karaoke gear, the karaoke "box" possessed the dual advantages of privacy and cheapness. Now, instead of peeling off ¥10,000 notes to buy a bottle of Johnny Walker, the company of a barely bilingual Thai hostess, and a chance to fight for a mike with a roomful of other salarymen, patrons could sing to their hearts' content for a low hourly charge and bring their own cans of Asahi Dry.

Soon karaoke boxes (also called cabins or clubs) were proliferating like bamboo sprouts after a rainstorm. At first educators and parents voiced concern that these tiny rooms containing little more than a table, sofas, and a giant karaoke machine might become dens of iniquity, where teenagers

• inebriated revelers = 酔っ払った酒宴客 *yopparatta shuen-kyaku* • hone = 〈腕・演技を〉磨く *(ude, engi o) migaku* • heckler = 野次る人 *yajiru hito*
• unhip = ださい／流行遅れの *dasai/ryūkō-okure no* • peel off = むきとる 〈ここでは札束から札を〉 *mukitoru (koko de wa satsutaba kara satsu o)*

unable to afford the price of a love hotel would unbridle their passions and imbibe illegal substances. Their concerns proved to be largely unwarranted, however. "We've found that once young people get caught up in singing they don't have time for anything else," says Yamamoto Yūji, general manager of the Presidential Affairs Office of Daiichi Kōsho, a Tokyo-based company that operates 370 Big Echo karaoke clubs throughout Japan. "Teenagers, especially, will try to see how many songs they can sing in 30 minutes or one hour. They don't want to waste a second." To thwart the few who might have libidinous intentions, owners have installed corridor windows and instructed their staffs to check in periodically. As a result, an afternoon in a karaoke box is usually like a day at Disneyland: good, clean fun.

In its new incarnation, karaoke soon proved attractive to women as well, who had understandably stayed away from the smoky bars filled with drunken, leering middle-aged men. Upon discovering that karaoke boxes provide a convenient and safe way to party, Office Ladies, housewives, and schoolgirls began to frequent them with their friends, and in no time became karaoke fanatics. Today nearly 60 percent of the patrons of Japan's 12,000 karaoke clubs are female.

photo courtesy of Daiichi Kosho Co., Ltd

GETTING CARRIED AWAY IN A BIG ECHO KARAOKE CLUB

Karaoke Today

By making it accessible and fun for all, the karaoke box helped turn karaoke into a goldmine. The industry currently boasts an annual take of nearly ¥1 trillion (about $12 billion) and its products are enjoyed by 58 million people—about half the country's population—on more than 500,000 commercial karaoke systems nationwide.

But those seeking easy profits had best be warned: the karaoke market has matured and competition is fierce. To survive, clubs today have to be different from the pack.

For many the difference is lower prices and special discounts. One club in Tokyo's Kabukichō entertainment district, Do-re-mi-fa Don, charges only ¥500 (about six dollars) per person for a 90-minute session that starts before 7:30 PM. This is dirt-cheap in an area where the standard cover charge for a karaoke-equipped hostess club is ¥10,000 (about $120).

Other clubs, located in suburban areas, lure housewives and their children with special lunch deals and daytime rates. Some even stock cassette tapes or laser discs of children's songs so that kids won't become bored out of their minds while their moms eat pilaf and pore over their songbooks.

Not surprisingly, the ever-enterprising McDonald's has found a place in this market, filling the low-cost karaoke-for-kids niche by furnishing 28 of its 150 party rooms in Japan with karaoke equipment called, appropriately enough, McSong. Groups with children pay only ¥500 an hour, compared with ¥1,000 for adults. Also, 600 of the 4,700 songs in the McSong library are for kids. "It hasn't made a radical difference in our bottom line," says McDonald's spokesman Kamiya Kenji, "but it's a popular service that has turned a lot of kids into McDonald's fans—and that's our aim."

Clubs in Ginza and other high-rent nightlife districts are setting themselves apart from the crowd by packaging karaoke as upscale entertainment for the expense-account elite. A former Ginza hostess club, Namiki, charges ¥10,000 an hour for a group of up to five to use any of its eight luxuriously appointed rooms. One, with a small Japanese-style garden, is presumably reserved for *enka* aficionados.

Even luxury hotels, which once scorned karaoke as a plebeian fad, are trying to attract karaoke enthusiasts. In May 1994, Tokyo's Keio Plaza Hotel opened Karaoke 47, which boasts four soundproof booths on its 47th floor. Equipped with state-of-the-art Pioneer sound machines, the booths cost ¥5,000 (about $60) per hour before 5 PM and ¥8,000 (about $95) between 5 and 11, when the club closes. The hotel also offers a "Sing and Stay" package for guests who want to sing in the shower after closing time. For ¥13,000 (about $150), they get two hours in a booth, an overnight stay, and breakfast the next morning.

The Keio Plaza decided to install the booths after noticing that guests often wanted to sing after drinking (singing while drinking was not really an option at the hotel bar), but had no place to go. "We would recommend places outside, but often

• unbridle – 拘束を解く／解き放つ *kosoku o toku/tokihanatsu* • imbibe = 飲む *nomu* • new incarnation = 新しい姿／生まれ変わり *atarashii sugata/umare kawari* • dirt cheap – 格安／ただ同然 *kakuyasu/tada dozen* • pore over = 熱心に読む／頁をめくる *nesshin ni yomu/peiji o mekuru* • aficionados – 愛好者／ファン *aikosha/fan* • plebeian fad = 低級な／俗な流行 *teikyū na/zoku na ryukō* • state-of-the-art = 最新型の *saishingata no*

a reservation was required. It was just too much trouble for a lot of guests," says hotel spokeswoman Saitō Junko. "Finally we built Karaoke 47. Many of the guests who use it are businessmen and OLs—an older crowd than you would find at most karaoke clubs in this area. They appreciate the more relaxed and refined atmosphere."

Other entrepreneurs are taking karaoke to the most unlikely places. Iwai Yukio, a taxi driver in Sakai City, near Osaka, offers free karaoke service to his passengers. His onboard system includes four video monitors, a laser disc player, and a video library with 4,000 selections. The total cost of installation: ¥10 million, or $115,000. Iwai told the *Shukan Yomiuri* that nearly 70 percent of his passengers take advantage of the free service. "Some," he remarked, "have even requested that I keep circling the Hanshin Expressway until they finish singing."

IN TWO DECADES, KARAOKE HAS BECOME AS INTEGRAL A PART OF JAPANESE CULTURE AS SAKE AND CHERRY BLOSSOMS.

Those who prefer the acoustics of a train to a taxi can take advantage of the karaoke car that Nankai Tramway Co. operates between Naniwa Ward and Sakai, both in Osaka Prefecture. The car, complete with a 1,040-song library, rents for ¥48.000 (about $550) for two hours.

Karaoke has moved so far into the mainstream of Japanese life, and gained so much respectability as a result, that it has even penetrated that most un-show-business-like bastion of traditional culture: the Japanese public school system. Nearly 1,000 elementary schools across the country have installed karaoke equipment in their music rooms, which means that instead of listening to a teacher bang away on a battered upright and warble a folk song about rape blossoms, kids can now sing along to professionally produced videos on 50-inch screens.

Cutting Edge Karaoke

As karaoke widens its reach, karaoke software and hardware makers continue to finetune the technology. Sony Music Entertainment has introduced a software package that features vocals arranged for easy harmonizing. Fans of pop mega-stars Chage & Aska can take Chage's part and feel that they are really part of the group. Daiichi Kōsho, which has been in the karaoke business

• bastion = 砦 *toride* • bang away = （ピアノの鍵盤を）たたく *(piano no kenban o) tataku* • battered upright = 古くなって傷ついた竪型ピアノ *furuku natte kizutsuita tategata piano* • rape blossoms = 菜の花 *na no hana*

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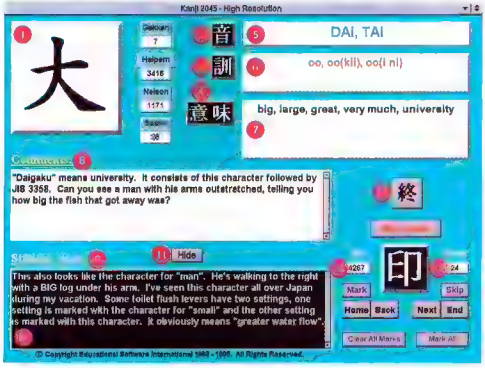
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終
印
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Back
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since 1973, has recently done Sony one better with a software package called Hamorun that allows singers to harmonize with their own voices—in five parts, no less. Another new Daiichi Kōsho package called Daburin gives singers who have trouble hitting the high notes digital assistance.

But the technological innovation that has truly revolutionized karaoke in the 1990s is "karaoke-on-demand." Operators of this on-line service digitally pipe thousands of songs over telephone wires to clubs, where they are stored on computer hard disks and CD-ROMs for easy replay.

Karaoke-on-demand was first introduced in 1992 by arcade game maker Taito Corp., but the sound quality was not nearly as good as that of laser discs, which were—and still are—the standard delivery format. Also, the on-line systems could not send background voices or video images because conventional copper wires did not have the capacity to handle the large volume of data needed; clubs, therefore, had to supply videos from their own libraries to accompany the music.

And yet the huge selection of songs made available—more than 10,000 on the most popular systems, including many current hits—rendered karaoke-on-demand popular with customers, especially younger ones who were tired of the oldies-but-goodies selections at most clubs. By the end of 1994, nearly ten percent of the nation's 500,000 karaoke systems were on-line.

photo courtesy of Daiichi Kosho Co., Ltd.

THE LATEST IN KARAOKE TECHNOLOGY: A DAIICHI KŌSHO DAM ON-LINE KARAOKE SYSTEM

The newer systems, such as Victor Co. of Japan's MK System, have improved sound quality by using digital compression technology to transmit more detailed audio data. Some new systems are offering additional functions, including ones that have nothing to do with karaoke. Sega Enterprise's Prologue 21, which debuted in December 1994, can be combined with Sega's SegaSaturn, a 32-bit video-game machine with multimedia features. While their friends are agonizing over their next song selection, patrons can play video games or even catch up on the latest sports and weather news.

Still other companies are busy developing the next generation of karaoke technology: home karaoke-on-demand. Together with IBM Japan, Daiichi Kōsho has been testing a karaoke-on-demand service in Kyoto. Part of a large-scale multimedia project being carried out by a private enterprise umbrella organization called the Broadband ISDN Business Chance Culture Creation (BBCC), the test has been a smashing success, according to Yamamoto. "People have been saying that karaoke is the business best suited to multimedia, and we're proving them right. The service is very popular with consumers."

The Future

Yet service suppliers must overcome several hurdles before they can pipe karaoke into every living room and six-mat apartment. Though the technology already exists, makers are not sure that the demand is there, especially if the charges for home karaoke are higher than those at the neighborhood karaoke box. Also, sticky issues regarding copyrights, including the threat of piracy, must be resolved before Daiichi Kōsho and other companies can start beaming karaoke over fiber-optic networks to homes. "There has even been talk of sending karaoke over the Internet," says Yamamoto, "but music publishers are up in arms over the idea. First we need a system for compensating rights holders and preventing piracy of their products, but it won't be easy to develop one. We are in a transitional period now."

Despite the difficulties, the future of karaoke looks bright, if for no other reason than the size of the largely untapped international market. Though thousands of revelers in Beijing bars and London pubs have discovered the pleasures of empty-orchestra singing, the overseas karaoke boom has yet to reach Japan-size proportions. "We have to take cultural differences into account in developing our international business," says Yamamoto. "Pioneer tried to introduce the karaoke *bokkusu* concept to the United States, but it didn't work. Unlike Japan, where houses are small and people prefer to socialize in clubs with company peers and school friends rather than at home with family members, Americans like to have home parties. That's the market we have to serve if we

• agonize over = 決め悩む *kimenayamu* • piracy = 著作権侵害／盗用 *chosaku-ken shingai/tōyō*

want to expand our business in the United States."

Daichi Kōsho is, in fact, already serving that market through its two US offices, and recording brisk sales of its home karaoke systems. To keep stay-at-home lounge singers supplied with material, the company's New York studio turns out a steady stream of English-language karaoke software.

In Japan, meanwhile, karaoke has become far more than a fad: two decades after its introduction it has become as integral a part of the culture as sake and cherry blossoms (in fact, cherry blossom parties these days are often karaoke parties). An interesting indication of karaoke's impact is the decline of another Japanese institution: the drunken salaryman. According to a recent study by Tokyo police researchers, the number of drunks taken into protective custody has declined to one-third of its mid-70s peak of 35,000. The reason, say researchers, is karaoke. In 1976, the year karaoke first became popular, the number of drunks escorted to the slammer fell by 4,000. The start of the second karaoke boom, in 1982, witnessed another sharp drop. Following the introduction of karaoke boxes later in the decade the number plunged again. "Our findings may appear odd," a police official told the *Japan Times*, "but there is no doubt that karaoke, as a means to vent frustration, is helping to reduce the number of people who get drunk and lose control of themselves."

Perhaps the answer to the high crime rate in the United States is not midnight basketball, but a mike in the hand and a music video on the screen.

Mark Schilling *is a freelance writer based in Tokyo.*

• brisk – 好調な *kōchō na* • turn out – 生産する／売り出す *seisan suru/uridasu* • protective custody – （酔っ払いの）保護（収容） *(yopparai no) hogo (shūyō)* • the slammer = 軍務庁／留置場 *gunmuchō/ryūchijō (zokugo)*

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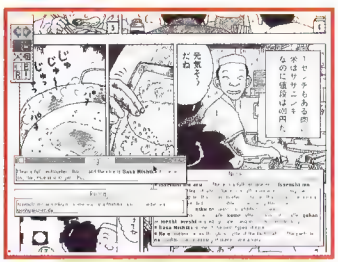

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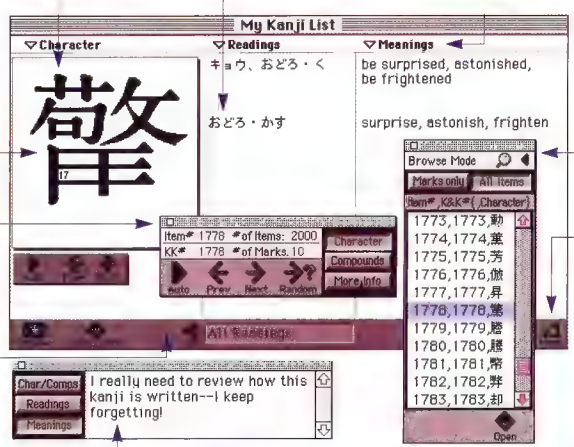

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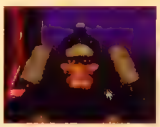

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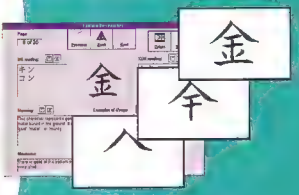

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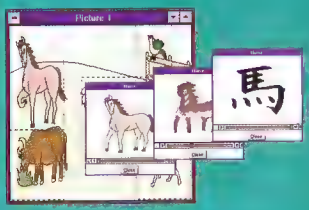

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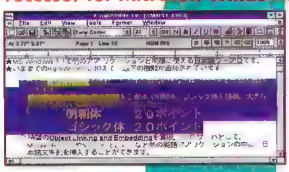

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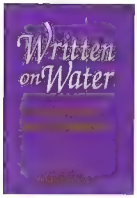

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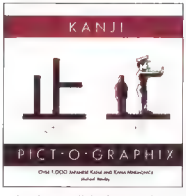

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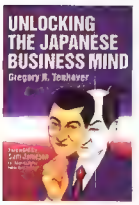

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The Brothers: The Hidden World of Japan's Richest Family

by Lesley Downer
Random House, 1995

reviewed by John K. Urda

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Tsutsumi Seiji at the Sezon Museum of Art, one of his many holdings

From the Medicis to the Kennedys, the world's richest, most powerful families have always fascinated the rabble and provided a window on the fortunes of their countries. Japan is no exception, and now Americans can read the extraordinary saga of the Tsutsumi family in Lesley Downer's *The Brothers: The Hidden World of Japan's Richest Family.*

It is a wonder that, prior to this book, the story had not been told in English. In Japan, the Tsutsumis are not just rich and famous—they are flamboyant multi-billionaires and a national obsession. Politically astute, socially influential, fashionable and secretive, the Tsutsumi brothers head the Seibu empire encompassing one-sixth of the land in Japan as well as a network of resorts, railroads, department stores, and professional sports teams. Their relentless rise—accompanied by plenty of scandal, luxury, and greed—as well as their uncertain future, makes the Tsutsumi story a fitting metaphor for twentieth-century Japan. Downer, a British journalist who earlier traced Bashō's steps in *On the Narrow Road*, ably tells their tale and, despite some resistance from her subjects (including the threat of legal action), has produced a well-researched and absorbing book.

The generation of statesmen and tycoons who sprang from the Meiji era are legendary in Japan. These larger-than-life figures reveled in the freedoms that came with the fall of the shogunate, and accumulated wealth very quickly. Not bound by the old morality, as Lesley Downer writes, "they thought they could do anything: the whole country lay at their feet, waiting to be conquered." Tsutsumi Yasujirō, born in 1889, was one such giant. A pushy country boy who lost both parents at an early age, Yasujirō studied politics at Waseda where he ingratiated himself with the elite. By the time he graduated in 1913, the wily upstart had squandered his family's meager assets on a few dubious investments, but had arrived at a formula that would soon carry him to success: "Do what no one else wants to do, and money will come to you."

So in the boom years after World War I, while the rest of Japan's young entrepreneurs were busy with retailing and manufacturing, Tsutsumi began snooping around for land. As Downer explains, real estate was not a hot commodity but, "as far as Yasujirō was concerned, it was all there for the taking. No one could fathom why he wanted it. It seemed eccentric, even crazy, to sink your last yen into a patch of land in the middle of nowhere."

Nevertheless, not far from the resort town of Karuizawa, Tsutsumi found a village that had fallen on hard times and, with the help of his elite connections and a bit of cajolery, strong-armed the residents into selling him their common lands for a song. Within a few years, the quiet forests had become a thriving development of cheap vacation homes for upwardly mobile Tokyoites. Hotels were needed, and railroads to get there, and one project followed another. An empire had been born.

But the story of Tsutsumi Yasujirō, whose ravenous conquest of the countryside was matched only by his machinations as a right-wing Diet member and his rapacious abuse of women, is just the beginning. Most of *The Brothers* is devoted to the lively exploits of Yasujiro's sons and heirs, Seiji and Yoshiaki. Upon Yasujirō's death in 1964, the half-brothers (sons of two different mistresses) received uneven shares of his empire, setting off a rivalry that continues today. Like their father, the Tsutsumi brothers are mavericks; and like their father, they personify their times—though in sharply different ways.

While Yasujirō was coarse and overbearing, Seiji, the older son and heir-apparent, was a sensitive, artistic, and intelligent rebel: as a student at Tokyo University soon after the war he was an outspoken Communist leader, and has since become an accomplished poet and novelist under the pen-name Tsujii Takashi. Naturally, father and son clashed. Though Seiji took

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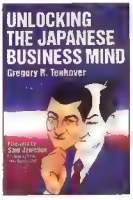

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When you feel comfortable with a kanji, element or compound, mark it as "familiar." Familiar items will always automatically be displayed in a different color from unfamiliar terms—in any group, in any view. So any time you study a group, you can **instantly see how much you've already covered,** and how far you still need to go.

And to tie it all together, ***Spectra Kanji*** can even give you **comprehensive tests** on all of your familiar kanji, elements, and compounds, so you can find out just how familiar with them you really are. With ***Spectra Kanji*** you have a concrete way to **gauge both the quantity and the quality of your progress.** And you'll always have a concrete answer when someone asks you how many kanji you know!

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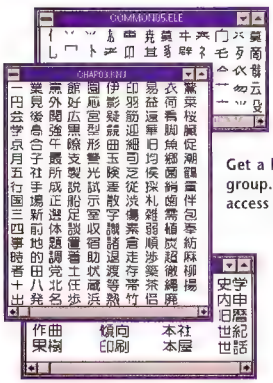
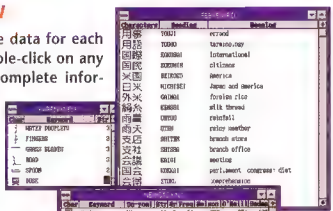


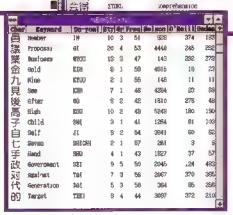
TABLE VIEW

Focus in on detailed reference data for each of the items in a group. Double-click on any item to instantly access its complete information profile in card view.



LIST VIEW

Get a bird's-eye view of the items in a group. Double-click on any item to access its card view information profile.



CARD VIEW

Here's where the power of the methodology takes shape. The elements, kanji, or compounds in a group are transformed into a deck of turbo-charged flash cards. Flip back and forth through the cards in sequence, or jump around in random order. Quiz yourself by selectively hiding and revealing areas on the cards. When you master a card, pull it from the deck, and keep going until you've mastered them all. Switch between the four lists of additional information described below at the touch of a button. When you see an element, kanji, or compound in card view, you have at your fingertips everything you need in order to tattoo its structure, readings, and meanings into your brain forever. It's just-in-time learning taken to its full potential.

The component building blocks, which comprise the target item, along with their keywords and primary readings, in the order in which they are written. Mentally create a vivid image (and corresponding phrase or story line) which ties together the keyword of the target item and the keywords of its respective components. Focus on that image for a few seconds, and the structure of the target kanji or element is yours forever. Sound crazy? Try it. It works like magic.

The kanji and elements which contain the target item, along with their keywords and readings. After you've mastered the target item and its components, learning any of the items in this list would be a natural next step.

The words which contain the target item, along with their readings and meanings. Useful, commonly occuring compounds have been chosen specifically to ease the process of memorizing the *on-yomi* readings of the kanji they contain.

Certain structural components of kanji actually provide clues as to the probable *on-yomi* reading of kanji which contain them. If the target kanji contains one of these components, then all other kanji containing that component are listed here. By providing you with this method of easily comparing and contrasting the readings of these kanji, ***Spectra Kanji*** places these powerful reading clues at your disposal. You'll not only boost your ability to recall the readings of kanji you've already studied, but also your ability to accurately guess the readings of kanji you encounter for the first time.

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From there I saw the stars

by Raul Marcos

The author (at left) and classmates in Gokayama

It happened that I was born in a town that already existed. While growing up, little by little I noticed that the universe of things was done. The house, the garden, the street, the plaza, the school, the aunts, the grandfathers, the uncles, the brothers, the business of my father, the intelligent and protective look of my mother—everything was already made. The beach, the riviera, and the wonderful nature that God had given as a gift around us...the church with its saints and our country with its heroes. Tampico was my universe, and from there I saw the stars. All of them were mine.

I traveled my country and its towns, and the limits of my state and suburbs on a map, on the blackboard, and an old textbook, the same like the hills, the mountains, the rivers, and the cities of all Mexico. On a globe and five continental maps I learned the lakes and the seas, and I knew where Mt. Everest, the Rhine, Spain, and Mongolia were. In that tranquil Jesuit school of my hometown, I came to understand the history of Athens, Rome, Egypt, India, of the Toltec emperors, the Mayan culture, the greatness of the Incas, and the lost Indians of the Amazon.

As soon as I was looking and knowing more, I observed that everything was done and that the world was sensational, contradictory, and harmonic at the same time. It was a world that spun around my hometown, and everything that was beyond the hills and the horizon was only more to learn. Books, newspapers, chats with my father and my grandmother, radio, and movies were my contacts with the rest of the world.

After 20 years of hard work, my father Emilio and my mother Enriqueta went for a three-month trip around the world. During that trip they fell in love with Japan. Its culture, history, and people made a great impression on them, and they traveled several more times to Japan. Every time they went, my father told me fantastic stories. So beginning in 1960, I started to develop a nice feeling about this country and I always kept in mind, "One day I shall go to Japan." Of course, I never thought I would be learning the language or living in a Japanese house with a host family—I thought I would come just as a tourist.

I took some Japanese classes in Monterrey, Mexico, where I now live, but this was not enough. Finally I decided to go to Japan as a student at Eurocentre in Kanazawa for a period of three months.

I found Kanazawa to be a very interesting place to study because the city is not so big (population 440,000) and has many places to visit, like the Noh theater, museums, old temples, and a castle. I participated in several activities and excursions that the school had arranged, like visits to Kenrokuen Park, the fish market, Ninja-dera temple, and the Eastern Pleasure Quarter (Geisha district), and black ink painting, kimono dressing, tea ceremony, paper tie-dying, Japanese cooking, stone seal engraving, calligraphy, and flower arrangement, among other things. I also took trips to Takayama City, Hakusan Super Forest Road, Gokayama, Noto Peninsula, and Kyoto.

While in Kanazawa, I was able to participate as an observer in a political campaign for the prefectural election. Fortunately my candidate won, and I felt happy for him. I enjoyed the meetings and the celebration party he held for all his participants, which was a nice experience.

During Golden Week, I went to Nara, Himeji, Okayama, Onomichi, Kurashiki, Hiroshima, and Miyajima, nine days total. I came to know the splendor of the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyoto. In these cities you can find the old Japan or maybe the Japan we used to know.

Through my sightseeing, I met many nice and kind people. While window shopping in a small town close to Nara, I saw a very beautiful samurai helmet embroidered in silk, silver, and gold thread. I asked about the price, and it was ¥8,000. So the woman in the shop wrapped it. I gave her my card, but unfortunately the shop didn't accept credit cards. Instead she said to me, "Please take it as a present as you liked it so much." I was so impressed by her kindness. I asked her address, and I said that I would send her the total amount. We took several pictures together and had a very nice conversation. After I got home I sent her the money and called her to let her know it was coming. She was very happy to hear my voice again. She later called me again, and I received two beautiful letters from her.

As a student in Kanazawa, I found Japan very different from the point of view of the tourist and very different from my father's stories. My father died last year, and he is not here anymore to hear about my wonderful experiences and the different Japan I found, one with no more samurai warriors with strong bodies. But strong minds make their own war to build a strong economy, playing with computers for their own future. When I had my fill of that world, everything became images and voices deep inside my head and my heart.

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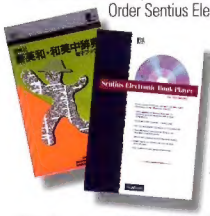

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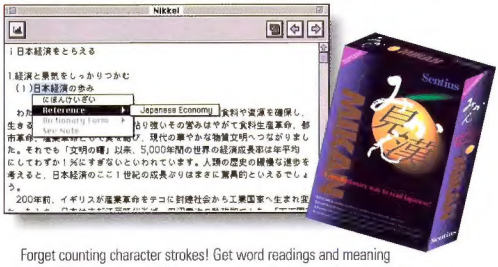

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